

Emergency services join forces in blood donation drive

By David Lea
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Halton's police, fire and emergency services personnel are no strangers when it comes to saving lives, but this summer they're going above and beyond the call of duty to help more people by donating blood.

The three groups are participating in the Canadian Blood Services third annual Sirens for Life blood donor challenge, which is charged with reaching 1,300 units of donated blood by September 3.

"It's really a partnership around saving lives because for the Canadian Blood Services that is our mandate by providing blood for patients and of course for police, fire and EMS saving people's lives is part of their daily routine as well," said Renee Naiman, regional director of Canadian Blood Services for Central Ontario.

"We try to have some fun with it by challenging the police, fire and EMS workers to beat each other in the number of collections they have during the summer."

While the challenge between Halton's emergency personnel may be lighthearted, the reason for the challenge is serious due the nation's overall blood supply sitting at very low levels.

Naiman chalks this lack of blood donation to the summer preoccupations of potential donors.

"Part of the challenge is that it's been beautiful weather throughout all of June and people are just out there after a long winter saying, 'You know what, this is beautiful. It's summer, we're going to go out there and have a great time,'" said Naiman.

"We all agree with that but what we want to remind people is in addition to packing up your goods and getting your kids out of school and getting ready, put a slot in your calendar to go out and just donate blood."



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GIFT OF LIFE: Registered nurse Lorraine Bruce (left), Regional Director of Blood Services Canada for Central Ontario Renee Naiman (centre) and Halton Regional Police Staff Sgt. Peter Hodgson prepare paramedic Roy Griffin to give blood.

With the Canadian Blood Services supplying blood to 58 hospitals throughout Ontario and with people pouring onto the highways to reach vacation destinations, the need for blood is only growing.

"Over the summer, you get a lot of traumas and a lot of motor vehicle accidents," said Naiman. "Unfortunately that kind of stuff doesn't take a holiday."

Besides injuries, blood is also needed to help patients cope with a number of diseases such as cancer.

"What people don't know is that when people go through chemotherapy for cancer treatment they need blood support

and people don't realize that," said Naiman. "Cancer therapies work because they knock out basically all of your body's cell producing areas, including blood supply. So during that chemotherapy you need the support of blood and platelets, which is a component of blood, to make sure you don't bleed and you can survive that chemotherapy."

For the squeamish who fear making that first donation, Halton Regional Police Staff Sgt. Peter Hodgson, who recently made his 119th blood donation, has these words of comfort.

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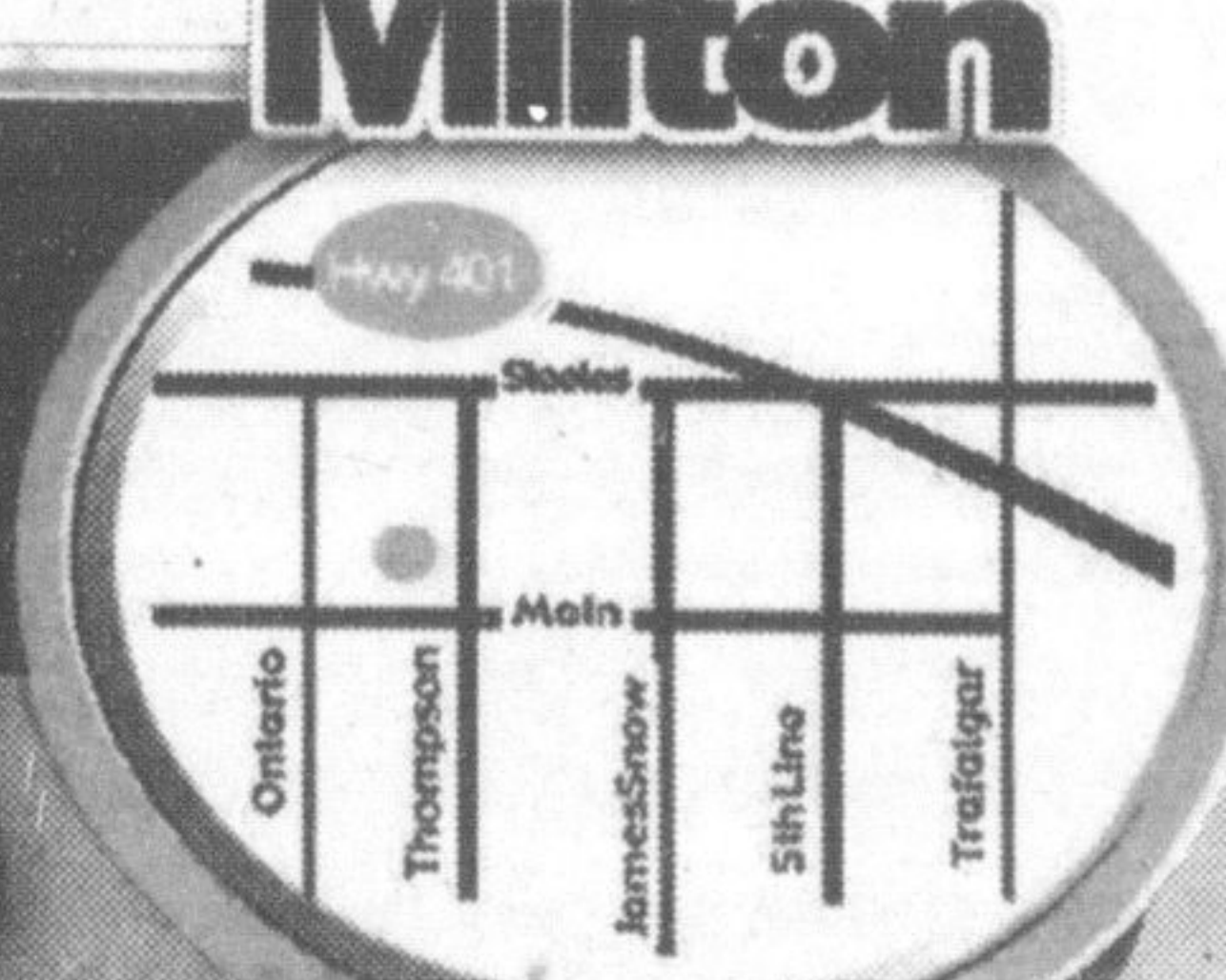
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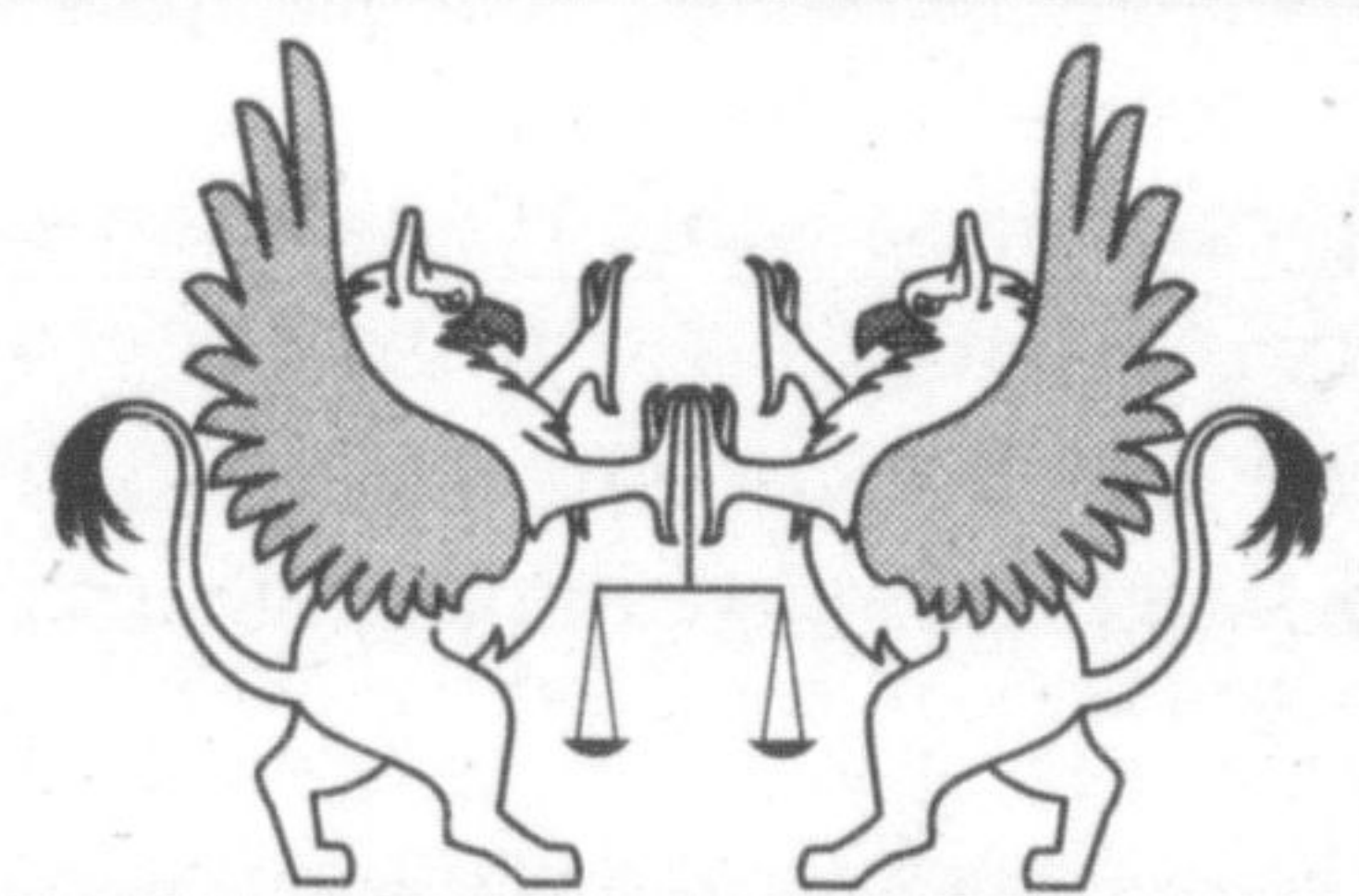
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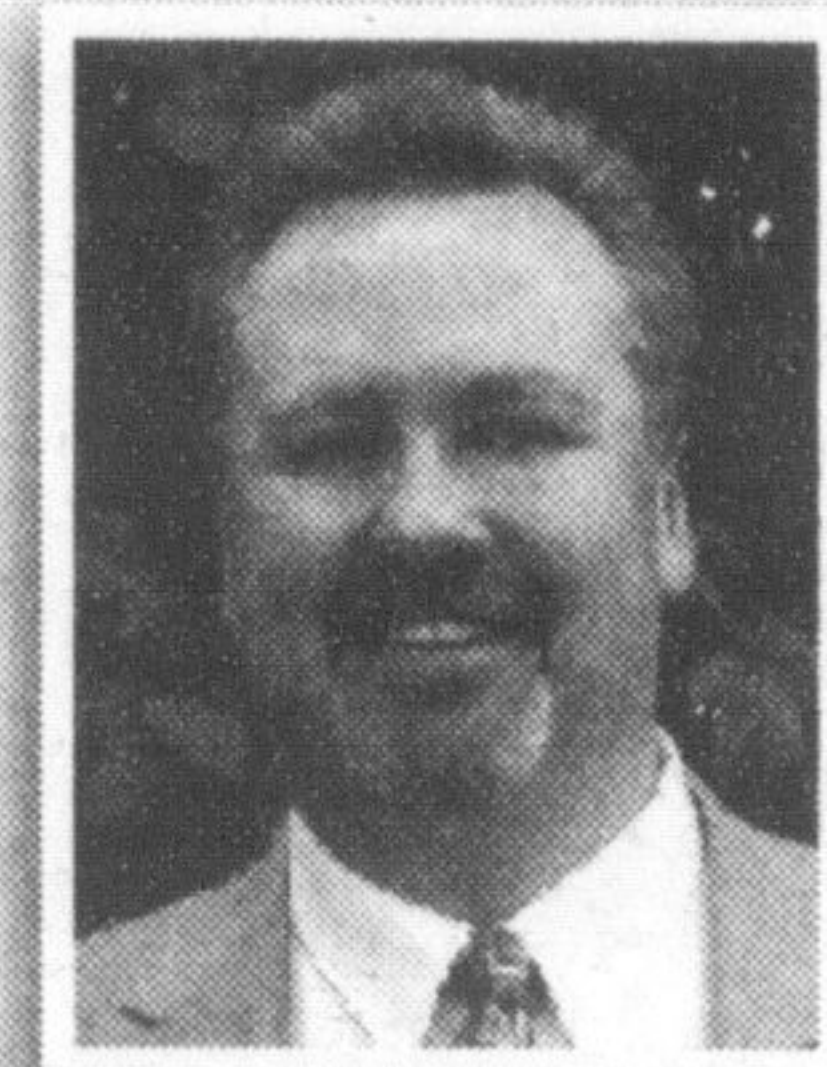
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